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Viewing cable 08SANJOSE829, SEVENTH COSTA RICA-NICARAGUA BINATIONALS: MORE

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#08SANJOSE829**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08SANJOSE829	2008-10-20 15:16	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy San Jose

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-07/Investigacion/NotasDestacadas/Investigacion2704388.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-07/Investigacion/NotaPrincipal/Investigacion2704402.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-07/Investigacion/NotasSecundarias/Investigacion2704436.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-07/Investigacion/NotasSecundarias/Investigacion2705536.aspx>

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DE RUEHSJ #0829/01 2941516
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P 201516Z OCT 08
FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0198
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 000829

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CEN.

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/20/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ENVI](#) [PBTS](#) [KTIP](#) [SENV](#) [CS](#) [NU](#)
SUBJECT: SEVENTH COSTA RICA-NICARAGUA BINATIONALS: MORE
TALK, LITTLE SUBSTANCE

Classified By: DCM Peter M. Brennan for reason 1.4(d).

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Seventh Binational Commission Meeting between Costa Rica and Nicaragua, held on October 3 in San Jose, produced 20 "accords" but little substance. Most agenda items in the final document simply called for further dialogue. Of note, however, Costa Rica agreed to grant high school diplomas to illegal Nicaraguan immigrants; Nicaragua agreed to finalize a plan to protect virgin ecological reserves on the Eastern side of the border; and the two countries agreed to a new software program to map their shared border and to facilitate the addition of more border markers. Absent was the topic of Costa Rican navigation rights on the Rio San Juan; written arguments have been presented to the International Court of Justice, with hearings to be held next Spring and a final decision to be announced later in 2009. MFA interlocutors expressed doubt at achieving much progress in other areas, including securing the border against illegal immigration. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) On October 7, we met with Sergio Ugalde and Arnoldo Brenes, MFA special advisors for Nicaraguan issues, who walked us through the various binational accords. Most notable was an agreement from the Costa Rican Ministry of Education (MEP) to grant certificates of completion (including diplomas) to illegal Nicaraguan students progressing through the Costa Rican educational system. Before, when a student completed his/her education, the MEP could not grant a diploma because the student in an irregular immigration status lacked an official Costa Rican identity card, or cedula. Under the agreement, the MEP would now accept a "proof of identity" letter from the Nicaraguan Embassy in order to provide school documents to children at various grade levels. The agreement made clear that the identity documents would be used only for the MEP's administrative purposes and would not indicate a regularized status.

13. (U) Officials from the Costa Rican Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE) and the Nicaraguan Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA) presented agreements to pursue common projects under the Binational Strategic Environmental Plan within the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Nicaragua also agreed to present its plan for the "establishment and operation" of national ecological corridors within the still-virgin forests along the shared border.

14. (U) MFA contacts hailed a letter of intent between the Costa Rican National Geographic Institute and the Nicaraguan Institute of Territorial Analysis to use the same "geospatial" mapping software as an important step toward harmonizing the coordinates of new border markers. Adding more markers would better delineate the physical border on the ground.

15. (SBU) The eighth agreement in the final document calls for both countries to strengthen border controls "with a view to eliminating smuggling" (and trafficking, the MFA told us) in persons. Ugalde and Brenes expressed extreme skepticism, however, that Nicaragua had any real intention to re-enforce its borders or to discourage its citizens from entering illegally into Costa Rica, where more economic opportunity exists.

16. (SBU) Nicaragua only agreed to "continue to study" Costa Rica's request for reciprocity in visa policies. The GOCR Directorate of Immigration has a non-immigrant visa category that allows aliens from countries for which a Costa Rican visa is required (such as Nicaragua) to enter without a visa if they hold full-validity U.S., Schengen (most EU countries), or Canadian visas. Nicaragua has been unwilling to abdicate its "sovereign authority" by pegging its non-immigrant visa policy to the visa criteria of other countries. Ugalde and Brenes suggested that Costa Rica may therefore drop Nicaragua from the list of countries whose citizens enjoy this benefit.

17. (U) Agreements to explore municipal exchanges, to improve

the health of those living in border communities, to expand cultural exchanges, and to expand cooperation in the tourism industries were also included. The complete text of the GOCR MFA's press release, which included the final document and all 20 accords, can be found at the MFA's Web site: www.rree.go.cr.

18. (C) COMMENT: Ugalde and Brenes described Nicaraguan cooperation as less than forthcoming. The GOCR had to propose several dates and pursue the Nicas to get them to

commit to holding this meeting. While the bilateral meetings

--

which have been on-again, off-again since 1994 -- have been important to the Arias administration as a show of improving relations between neighbors (and to some extent as a safety valve to release some of the historic tension between the two countries), the meetings continue to produce more talk than substance. END COMMENT.

CIANCHETTE